



US010480834B2

(12) **United States Patent**
Jandal et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 10,480,834 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** ***Nov. 19, 2019**

(54) **REFRIGERANT COOLING AND LUBRICATION SYSTEM**

(71) Applicant: **TRANE INTERNATIONAL INC.**,
Davidson, NC (US)

(72) Inventors: **Daoud A. Jandal**, La Crosse, WI (US);
Brian Thomas Sullivan, La Crosse, WI (US);
Reginald Loyd Berry, Onalaska, WI (US);
Dennis Lee Justin, La Crosse, WI (US);
Matthew Aron Witt, La Crosse, WI (US);
Damion Scott Plymesser, De Soto, MN (US)

(73) Assignee: **TRANE INTERNATIONAL INC.**,
Davidson, NC (US)

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 206 days.

This patent is subject to a terminal disclaimer.

(21) Appl. No.: **15/376,203**

(22) Filed: **Dec. 12, 2016**

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

US 2017/0089620 A1 Mar. 30, 2017

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 14/763,453, filed as application No. PCT/US2014/013029 on Jan. 24, 2014, now Pat. No. 9,518,767.

(Continued)

(51) **Int. Cl.**

F25B 49/00 (2006.01)
F25B 31/00 (2006.01)
F25B 45/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **F25B 31/002** (2013.01); **F25B 45/00** (2013.01); **F25B 31/004** (2013.01);

(Continued)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC F25B 13/00; F25B 31/002; F25B 31/006;
F25B 49/02; F25B 2400/13; F25B 2500/26

See application file for complete search history.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

4,483,154 A 11/1984 Smeal
5,123,259 A 6/1992 Morgan, Sr.
(Continued)

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

CN 101558268 A 10/2009
CN 102155429 A 8/2011
(Continued)

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

International Search Report and Written Opinion for International Application No. PCT/US2014/013029, dated May 15, 2014, 12 pgs.

Primary Examiner — Ljiljana V. Ciric

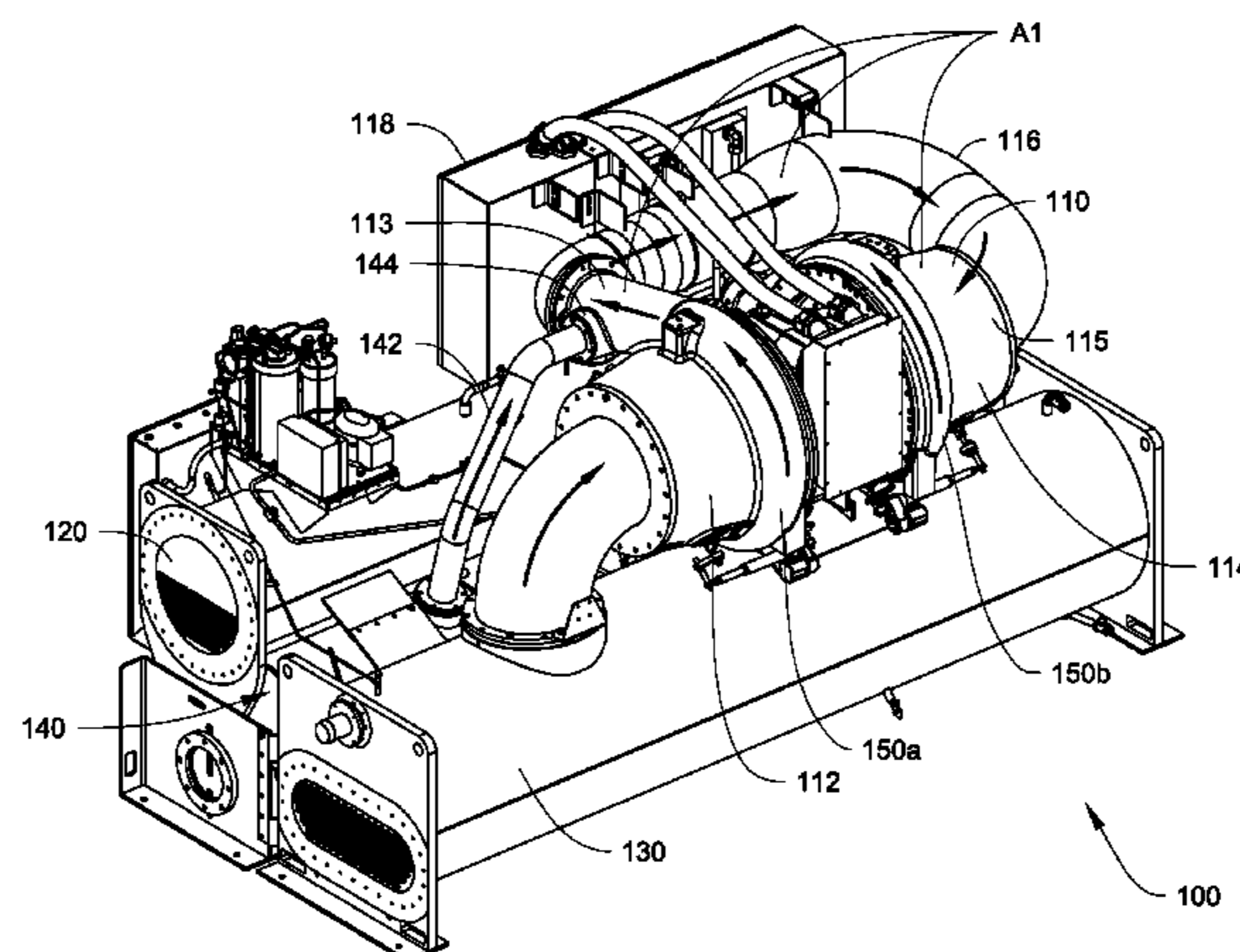
Assistant Examiner — Alexis K Cox

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Hamre, Schumann, Mueller & Larson, P.C.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Apparatuses, systems, and methods are disclosed to prime a refrigerant pump by decoupling the condenser from the refrigerant pump and the refrigerant pump line or shielding from a condenser operation prior to startup of the system, so that liquid refrigerant can be appropriately sourced from the condenser and/or the evaporator using flow control device(s) such as a source valve on a source line of the condenser and/or on a source line of the evaporator and the control of such valve(s).

11 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 61/757,079, filed on Jan. 25, 2013, provisional application No. 61/757,083, filed on Jan. 25, 2013, provisional application No. 61/757,081, filed on Jan. 25, 2013, provisional application No. 61/793,486, filed on Mar. 15, 2013, provisional application No. 61/793,197, filed on Mar. 15, 2013, provisional application No. 61/793,631, filed on Mar. 15, 2013.

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
 CPC . *F25B 2339/047* (2013.01); *F25B 2400/0403* (2013.01); *F25B 2400/13* (2013.01); *F25B 2500/01* (2013.01); *F25B 2500/16* (2013.01); *F25B 2500/26* (2013.01)

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

5,626,025 A * 5/1997 Hyde F25B 40/02
 62/117
 5,636,526 A * 6/1997 Plzak F25B 15/008
 62/475

6,065,297 A 3/2000 Tischer et al.
 6,931,879 B1 8/2005 Wiggs
 7,658,079 B2 2/2010 Bailey et al.
 8,117,859 B2 2/2012 Chessel et al.
 9,518,767 B2 * 12/2016 Jandal F25B 31/002
 2001/0037651 A1 11/2001 Butterworth et al.
 2003/0110786 A1 * 6/2003 Ueda F16K 3/262
 62/197
 2004/0182082 A1 * 9/2004 Saranchuk F01K 17/005
 60/698
 2010/0006264 A1 1/2010 Jadric et al.
 2010/0036530 A1 2/2010 Chessel et al.
 2010/0050669 A1 3/2010 Poux et al.
 2010/0192574 A1 8/2010 Langson
 2010/0326098 A1 12/2010 Rog et al.
 2014/0345311 A1 11/2014 Sun et al.

FOREIGN PATENT DOCUMENTS

JP H04103965 A 4/1992
 JP H0539963 A 2/1993
 WO 99-24767 5/1999

* cited by examiner

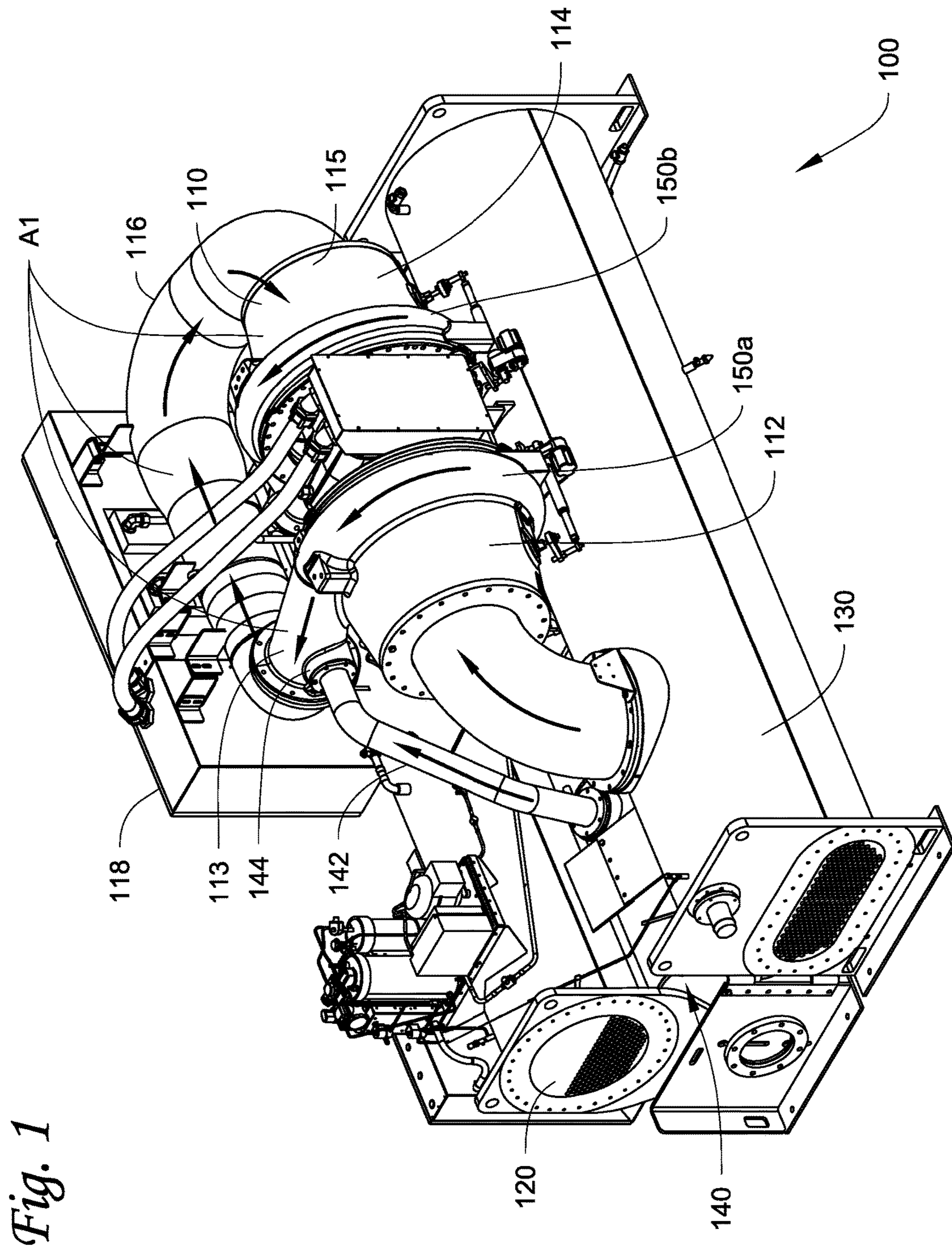
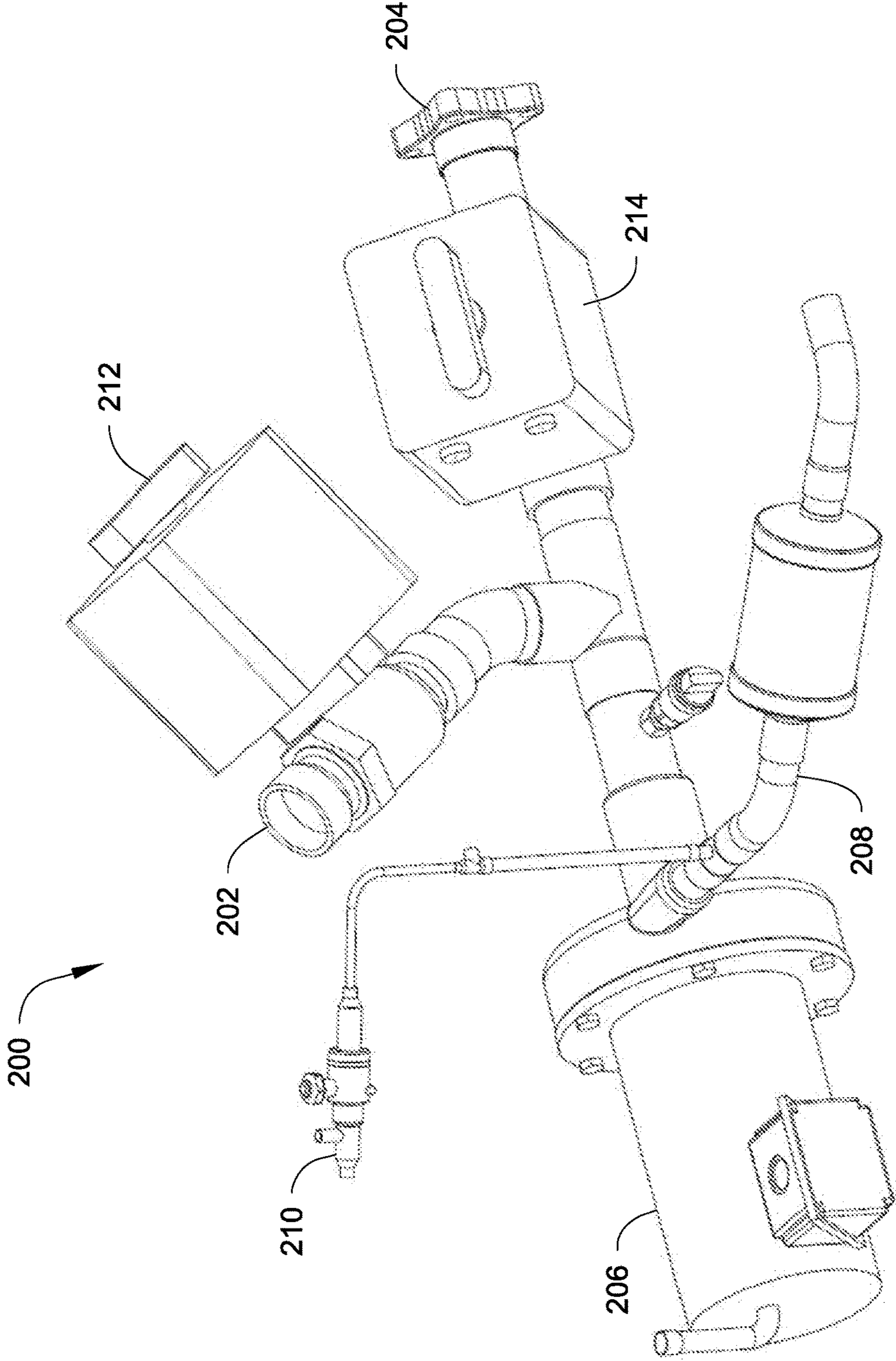


Fig. 1

Fig. 2



1

REFRIGERANT COOLING AND LUBRICATION SYSTEM

FIELD

The disclosure herein relates to heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (“HVAC”) or refrigeration systems, such as may include a chiller, and more particularly relates to providing refrigerant to cool the system, such as for cooling moving parts that may be part of the compressor, for example the compressor motor and the compressor bearings, and/or for cooling drives such as an adjustable or variable frequency drive. Generally, methods, systems, and apparatuses are described that are directed to priming a refrigerant pump by decoupling condenser operation, such as for example the condenser water pump, so that liquid refrigerant can be appropriately sourced from the condenser and/or the evaporator using flow control device(s), such as a source valve on a source line of the condenser and/or on a source line of the evaporator and the control of such valve(s).

BACKGROUND

A HVAC or refrigeration system, such as may include a chiller, can include a compressor, a condenser, an evaporator and an expansion device. In a cooling cycle of the HVAC or refrigeration system, the compressor can compress refrigerant vapor, and the compressed refrigerant vapor may be directed into the condenser to condense into liquid refrigerant. The liquid refrigerant can then be expanded by the expansion device and directed into the evaporator. Chiller systems typically incorporate standard components of a refrigeration circuit to provide chilled water for cooling, such as for example building spaces. A typical refrigeration circuit includes a compressor to compress refrigerant gas, a condenser to condense the compressed refrigerant to a liquid, and an evaporator that utilizes the liquid refrigerant to cool water. The chilled water can then be piped to locations for desired end use(s).

Components of the HVAC or refrigeration system, such as the compressor, may include moving parts, and therefore may require lubrication during operation. Lubricants, such as oil, are commonly used in the HVAC or refrigeration system to lubricate the moving parts.

SUMMARY

In some HVAC or refrigeration systems, liquid refrigerant can be used as a lubricant for components with moving parts, such as the moving parts of a compressor, including its motor and bearings therein. At shut off of a chiller, for example, refrigerant tends to migrate to the evaporator such as after and during a period of chiller shut off, so liquid refrigerant can be located in the evaporator. At start up, there can be an issue of whether the refrigerant pump is primed with a suitable and appropriate pressure differential so as to confirm a refrigerant flow through the refrigerant pump. This can be important, for example before starting the compressor of an oil free chiller. If there is not an appropriate pressure differential, the moving parts of the chiller, such as for example the bearings in the compressor, its motor, and the drive could not operate appropriately, can be at risk for damage, and the chiller overall may not function at desired efficiency due to the inadequate or ineffective refrigerant cooling and lubrication of the compressor.

To start the chiller, there may be a need to prime the pump. By shutting off the condenser water pump, the refrigerant

2

pump can be primed, and sourcing can be started for example from the evaporator to establish refrigerant flow and an appropriate pressure differential. A signal can be obtained that there is an appropriate pressure differential so to allow refrigerant to be delivered to the refrigerant and to allow the compressor to be started and also the condenser water pump. While this solution may be a possibility, it is not always practical to turn off the condenser water pump, if for example an HVAC or refrigeration system has multiple chillers, and there are certain areas of the system that could be impacted based on the system design.

Improvements can be made to provide liquid refrigerant to the moving parts during startup. Generally, apparatuses, systems, and methods are described to prime a refrigerant pump by decoupling a condenser operation, such as for example the condenser water pump, so that liquid refrigerant can be appropriately sourced from the condenser and/or the evaporator using flow control device(s) such as a source valve on a source line of the condenser and/or on a source line of the evaporator and the control of such valve(s).

For example during a startup or restart of the compressor, liquid refrigerant may be sourced from the evaporator by opening a source valve on the evaporator source line. Once confirmation is given that there exists an appropriate pressure differential, e.g. Δp , this confirmation can be done by using a unit controller that receives a signal from one or more appropriately positioned pressure transducers, such as along the refrigerant pump line. Once, Δp is established, which in some examples can be about 2 psi, there can be confirmation that there would be sufficient refrigerant flow to the compressor, so liquid refrigerant can flow to parts that may be in need of lubrication. Then the unit controller can start the compressor. After starting the compressor, there can be liquid refrigerant from operation of the condenser, so that the unit controller can close the source valve on the evaporator source line and open a source valve on the condenser source line, so that liquid refrigerant sourcing can be from the condenser.

Hereafter the term “source valve” is generally meant as a flow control device that allows or does not allow refrigerant into the refrigerant pump and refrigerant pump line. In some embodiments, any one or more of the source valves can be solenoid valves controlled by a unit controller.

In one embodiment, a refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly which may be used in an HVAC or refrigeration system and/or HVAC or refrigeration unit, such as a water chiller can include a condenser source line, an evaporator source line, a refrigerant pump line, and a refrigerant pump. The condenser source line and the evaporator source line are fluidly connected and can feed into the refrigerant pump line. The refrigerant pump is located on the refrigerant pump line, which can be connected to a compressor motor. On the condenser source line, a source valve is disposed that can have an open state and a closed state. On the evaporator source line, a source valve is disposed that can have an open state and a closed state. The source valve on the condenser source line is configured to decouple the condenser from the refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly in the closed state, such as during a compressor startup condition, and is configured to allow refrigerant flow from the condenser to flow through condenser source line in the open state. The source valve disposed on the condenser source line allows for the condenser to be decoupled, such as for example the effects of its water pump if in operation, so that there is no adverse effect on the lubrication and cooling of the compressor, such as at startup.

In one embodiment, a method of priming a refrigerant pump includes determining whether a compressor startup condition exists, activating the source valve on the condenser source line to the closed state to decouple the condenser from the refrigerant pump and refrigerant pump line, activating the source valve on the evaporator source line to the open state, pressurizing the refrigerant pump line, and determining that there is an appropriate pressure differential along the refrigerant pump line.

In some embodiments, once there is an appropriate pressure differential, a method of starting a compressor and lubricating the system can further include delivering refrigerant to the compressor and starting the compressor. The compressor and drive can be further lubricated by activating the source valve on the evaporator to the closed state, activating the source valve on the condenser source line to the open state, and sourcing refrigerant from the condenser to lubricate and cool the compressor and drive.

In general, the embodiments, approaches, and aspects shown and described herein are directed to decoupling the condenser along the condenser source line to allow priming of a refrigerant pump from an appropriate source prior to startup of the system, for example startup of the compressor. For example use of a source valve on the condenser source line to the refrigerant pump and refrigerant line can allow priming of the pump, such as from the evaporator, but where the condenser water pump does not need to be turned off and the priming of the refrigerant pump may not be affected by operation of the overall cooling tower and heat rejection side of the system. Decoupling of the condenser water pump from this cooling and lubrication function can still allow the condenser water pump to operate for example in systems with multiple chillers. After startup, refrigerant can be appropriately sourced for lubrication and cooling under all operating conditions as desired, including startup, restart, inverted start, full load, and partial load.

By the term “decouple”, “decouples”, “decoupling” or “decoupled”, it is to be appreciated that such terms are meant and intended as generally stopping fluid flow from one component to another component. For example, to decouple the condenser from a pump source line or feed can be accomplished by activating a flow control device, such as along the condenser source line, to an off state to stop fluid flow, e.g. refrigerant vapor, from entering the feed or source line to the pump and flowing to the pump. Such effect can help to avoid or at least reduce an educator/jet-like or accelerated fluid flow, which may be susceptible to entraining vapor into a relatively lower or middle pressure flow (e.g. bringing vapor into suction), which may not be desirable for pump operation, e.g. may result in pump cavitation (s).

Other features and aspects of the fluid management approaches will become apparent by consideration of the following detailed description and accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Reference is now made to the drawings in which like reference numbers represent corresponding parts throughout.

FIG. 1 illustrates a perspective view of one example of chiller, in particular a centrifugal water chiller, according to one embodiment.

FIG. 2 shows one embodiment of a refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly which may be implemented as part of a chiller system or unit.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A HVAC or refrigeration system, such as may include a chiller system, may commonly include components with moving parts, such as a compressor. The moving parts generally require proper lubrication. The lubrication is commonly provided by lubricants, such as oil. In some HVAC or refrigeration systems, the lubrication can be provided by liquid refrigerant. Such a HVAC or refrigeration system is sometimes called an oil-free system. In the oil-free system, liquid refrigerant can be directed to surfaces of the moving parts for lubrication. Improvements can be made to direct liquid refrigerant to the moving parts when, for example, the HVAC or refrigeration system such as may include a chiller that starts from an off cycle. Such startup conditions of the compressor may be due, for example but not limited to, a shut off occurring during periodic schedules such as in comfort cooling applications, and/or servicing or testing of one or more of the chillers in a larger system scheme, and/or a power surge or outage.

The embodiments as disclosed herein describe methods and systems directed to priming of a refrigerant pump by decoupling a condenser operation, such as for example the condenser water pump, so that liquid refrigerant can be appropriately sourced from the condenser and/or the evaporator using flow control device(s) such as a source valve on a source line of the condenser and/or on a source line of the evaporator and the control of such valve(s).

FIG. 1 illustrates a perspective view of one example of chiller **100**, such as for an HVAC or refrigeration system according to one embodiment. In particular, FIG. 1 shows a water chiller with a centrifugal compressor, e.g. a centrifugal chiller.

In the embodiment shown, the chiller **100** includes a compressor **110** that is configured to have a first compression stage **112** and a second compression stage **114**. The compressor **110** can be a centrifugal compressor. It will be appreciated that the type of chiller is merely exemplary and not meant to be limiting, as other chiller types that may use other types of compressors may suitably employ and implement the refrigerant pump priming and refrigerant sourcing approaches shown and described herein. It will also be appreciated that the number of stages of compression is merely exemplary, and that more or less than two stages of compression may be suitably implemented with the refrigerant pump priming and refrigerant sourcing approaches shown and described herein, as long as for example such compression components and moving parts that may be in need of refrigerant lubrication and cooling are configured to receive refrigerant provided from the refrigerant pump.

In some examples, the chiller **100** can be one of many chillers in an overall system that has a heat rejection unit, such as a cooling tower, where one or more condenser water pumps may be used to run water through the condensers of the chillers to reject heat to the environment from the chillers.

With further reference to the general structure of the chiller **100** shown in FIG. 1, the first compression stage **112** and the second compression stage **114** include a first volute **150a** and a second volute **150b** respectively. The chiller **100** also includes a condenser **120**, an evaporator **130** and an economizer **140**. A run-around pipe **116** is configured to fluidly connect the first compression stage **112** to the second compression stage **114** to form fluid communication between the first compression stage **112** and the second compression stage **114**. The run-around pipe **116** is fluidly connected to a discharge exit **113** of the first compression

stage 112 and an inlet 115 of the second compression stage 114. The discharge exit 113 is in fluid communication with the first volute 150a. The run-around pipe 116, the discharge exit 113 and the inlet 113 form a refrigerant conduit A1, which is configured to direct a refrigerant flow. The economizer 140 is configured to have an injection pipe 142 forming fluid communication with the refrigerant conduit A1 through an injection port 144. The injection pipe 142 is configured to direct vaporized flash refrigerant from the economizer 140 to the injection port 144.

Refrigerant flow directions when the chiller 100 is in operation are generally illustrated by the arrows. The refrigerant flow directions are typically in accordance with refrigerant passages, such as defined by the refrigerant conduit A1 and the first and second volutes 150a, 150b. In operation, refrigerant vapor from the evaporator 130 can be directed into the first compression stage 112. A first impeller (not shown in FIG. 1) located in the first compression stage 112 can compress the refrigerant vapor from the evaporator 130. The compressed refrigerant vapor can be collected by the volute 150a and directed into the refrigerant conduit A1. The compressed refrigerant is directed into the inlet 115 of the second compression stage 114 along the refrigerant conduit A1. In the second compression stage 116, a second impeller (not shown in FIG. 1) can be configured to further compress the refrigerant and then direct the compressed refrigerant into the condenser 120 through the second volute 150b. In the condenser 120, the compressed refrigerant may be condensed into liquid refrigerant. The liquid refrigerant leaving the condenser 120 is then directed into the evaporator 130.

The chiller 100 can also have a section 118 having a unit controller that controls certain valves and/or receives input (s) from sensors, transducers on the chiller 100, such as any one or more of the valves and/or sensors on the refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly 200 described below. The section 118 can also contain or be connected to the unit drive of the chiller 100. It will be appreciated that the unit controller at 118 can include a processor, a memory (and an input/output (I/O) interface as may be needed and/or suitable to control the chiller 100.

In one embodiment, the controller can be operatively connected to a refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly to provide liquid refrigerant to a pump, which thereafter can deliver liquid refrigerant to moving parts of the chiller, such as for example the compressor.

FIG. 2 shows one embodiment of a refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly 200 which may be implemented as part of a chiller system or unit, such as the chiller 100 shown in FIG. 1. The refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly 200 may be appropriately piped into the condenser and evaporator, e.g. 120 and 130 in FIG. 1, so as to source refrigerant therefrom to the compressor, e.g. 110.

In one embodiment, a refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly 200 which may be used in an HVAC or refrigeration system and/or HVAC or refrigeration unit, such as the water chiller 100 can include a condenser source line 202, an evaporator source line 204, a refrigerant pump line 208, and a refrigerant pump 206. The condenser source line 202 and the evaporator source line 204 are fluidly connected and can feed into the refrigerant pump line 208. The refrigerant pump 206 is located on the refrigerant pump line 208, which can be connected to a compressor motor, e.g. the compressor 110 of FIG. 1. A filter may be disposed on the refrigerant pump line 208 prior to leaving the assembly 200 to deliver the refrigerant to the compressor motor. On the condenser source line 202, a source valve 212 is disposed that can have

an open state and a closed state. On the evaporator source line 204, a source valve 214 is disposed that can have an open state and a closed state. The source valve 212 on the condenser source line 202 is configured to decouple the condenser, e.g. condenser 120 from the refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly 200 in the closed state, such as during a compressor startup condition, and is configured to allow refrigerant flow from the condenser to flow through condenser source line 202 in the open state. The source valve 212 disposed on the condenser source line 202 allows for the condenser to be decoupled, such as for example the effects of its water pump if in operation, so that there is no adverse effect on the lubrication and cooling of the compressor, such as at startup. A valve and line 210 can be fluidly connected to the refrigerant pump line 208 so as to allow refrigerant delivery to the drive of a chiller, e.g. chiller 100.

In operation, for example, the assembly 200 can prime the pump even in conditions where the condenser water pump may be running, e.g. such as when the condenser or another condenser in the system may still be active. For example, in one embodiment, the unit controller can in the event of a start-up condition control the source valve 212 on the condenser source line 202 to the refrigerant pump 206 to be shut off, which isolates or decouples the condenser from the refrigerant cooling and lubrication function of the compressor and drive. The shut off of the source valve 212 can be by a signal from the unit controller to the source valve 212. The refrigerant pump 206 can be primed, for example by turning on the refrigerant pump 206 and activating the source valve 214 on the evaporator source line 204 to an open position, which can allow sourcing of liquid refrigerant to the refrigerant pump 206. The activation of the source valve 214 on the evaporator source line 204 can be by a signal from the unit controller to turn the source valve 214 on. Once an appropriate Δp is established, such as at about 2 psi, the unit may be started, then the source valve 214 on the evaporator source line can be shut off, such as by the unit controller receiving a signal from a transducer(s), which the controller can signal the source valve 214 to turn off. The source valve 212 on the condenser source line 202 may receive a signal to turn on so that sourcing can then be from the condenser.

The refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly 200 of FIG. 2 can be implemented in a method for priming the refrigerant pump by decoupling the condenser operation, such as the operation of the condenser water pump in the heat rejection area of the system, e.g. the cooling tower. The unit controller is used to suitably control the components, valves, and/or suitably receive input from one or more transducers to carry out the methods herein, including for example but not limited to the method of priming the refrigerant pump and the method of lubricating the system. It will be appreciated that the unit controller, e.g. unit controller at 118 of chiller 100 can include a processor, a memory (and an input/output (I/O) interface as may be needed and/or suitable to control the components of the chiller 100 including for example, a refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly, e.g. assembly 200, when implemented with the chiller. The unit controller can also interface with the sensors/transducers that may be implemented with the chiller including the refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly, e.g. assembly 200.

In one embodiment, a method of priming a refrigerant pump includes determining whether a compressor startup condition exists, for example by the occurrence of any of the previous described conditions, activating the source valve on the condenser source line to the closed state to decouple the condenser from the refrigerant pump and refrigerant

pump line, activating the source valve on the evaporator source line to the open state, pressurizing the refrigerant pump line, and determining that there is an appropriate pressure differential along the refrigerant pump line.

In some embodiments, once there is an appropriate pressure differential, a method of starting a compressor and lubricating the system can further include delivering refrigerant to the compressor and starting the compressor. The compressor and drive can be further lubricated by activating the source valve on the evaporator to the closed state, activating the source valve on the condenser source line to the open state, and sourcing refrigerant from the condenser to lubricate and cool the compressor and drive.

Aspects

It will be appreciated that any of aspects 1 to 7 may be combined with any of aspects 8 to 10, and that any of aspects 8 and 9 may be combined with aspect 10.

Aspect 1. A heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) unit for an HVAC system comprising: a compressor having a motor and a drive; a condenser fluidly connected to the compressor; an evaporator fluidly connected to the condenser; a unit controller; and a refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly that comprises: a condenser source line fluidly connected to the condenser, an evaporator source line fluidly connected to the evaporator, a refrigerant pump line fluidly connected to the condenser source line and fluidly connected to the evaporator source line, the condenser source line and the evaporator source line feed into the refrigerant pump line, the refrigerant pump line is fluidly connected to at least one of the motor and the drive of the compressor, a refrigerant pump located on the refrigerant pump line, the refrigerant pump having an inlet and an outlet fluidly connected with the refrigerant pump line, and a flow control device disposed on the condenser source line, the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line having an open state and a closed state, wherein during a startup condition of the compressor, the unit controller is configured to activate the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to the closed state, where the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line in the closed state is configured to decouple the condenser from the refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly, and wherein during an operating condition of the compressor, the unit controller is configured to activate the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to direct refrigerant from the condenser through the condenser source line and through the refrigerant pump line and refrigerant pump to at least one of the motor and the drive of the compressor.

Aspect 2. The HVAC unit of aspect 1, wherein the HVAC unit is a water chiller.

Aspect 3. The HVAC unit of any of aspects 1 or 2, wherein the HVAC unit is an oil free water chiller.

Aspect 4. The HVAC unit of any of aspects 1 to 3, wherein the controller is configured to receive an input from a sensor to determine whether an appropriate pressure differential is present in the refrigerant pump line, in order to activate the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to direct refrigerant to the compressor.

Aspect 5. The HVAC unit of any of aspects 1 to 4, wherein the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line is a solenoid valve.

Aspect 6. The HVAC unit of any of aspects 1 to 5, further comprising a flow control device disposed on the evaporator source line, the flow control device disposed on the evaporator source line having an open state and a closed state.

Aspect 7. The HVAC unit of any of aspects 1 to 6, wherein the flow control device disposed on the evaporator source line is a solenoid valve.

Aspect 8. A method of priming a refrigerant pump of a refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly comprising: determining, with a unit controller, whether a compressor startup condition exists; activating, with the unit controller, a flow control device disposed on a condenser source line to a closed state, and decoupling a condenser, which is fluidly connected to the condenser source line, from a refrigerant pump and a refrigerant pump line; and activating, with the unit controller, a flow control device disposed on an evaporator source line to an open state, and pressurizing the refrigerant pump line with refrigerant flow from the evaporator source line, which is fluidly connected to an evaporator.

Aspect 9. The method of aspect 8, further comprising receiving by the unit controller an input from a sensor, and determining with the unit controller whether there is an appropriate pressure differential is present along the refrigerant pump line, in order to activate the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to direct refrigerant to the compressor.

Aspect 10. A method of lubricating a compressor of an HVAC system, comprising: activating, with a unit controller, a flow control device disposed on an evaporator source line to an open state, and pressurizing a refrigerant pump line with refrigerant flow from the evaporator source line, which is fluidly connected to an evaporator; receiving by the unit controller an input from a sensor, and determining with the unit controller whether there is an appropriate pressure differential present along the refrigerant pump line, in order to activate a flow control device disposed on a condenser source line to direct refrigerant to a compressor; activating, with the unit controller, the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to an open state, when the appropriate pressure differential is determined by the unit controller to be present along the refrigerant pump line; activating, with the unit controller, the flow control device disposed on the evaporator source line to a closed state; and starting the compressor and lubricating at least one of a motor and a drive of the compressor by delivering refrigerant from the condenser source line, which is fluidly connected to a condenser, so as to source refrigerant from the condenser.

With regard to the foregoing description, it is to be understood that changes may be made in detail, without departing from the scope of the present invention. It is intended that the specification and depicted embodiments are to be considered exemplary only.

The invention claimed is:

1. A heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) unit for an HVAC system comprising:
 - a compressor having a motor and a drive;
 - a condenser fluidly connected to the compressor;
 - a unit controller; and
 - a refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly that comprises:
 - a condenser source line fluidly connected to the condenser,
 - a refrigerant pump line fluidly connected to the condenser source line, the condenser source line feeds into the refrigerant pump line, the refrigerant pump line is fluidly connected to at least one of the motor and the drive of the compressor,

9

a refrigerant pump located on the refrigerant pump line, the refrigerant pump having an inlet and an outlet fluidly connected with the refrigerant pump line, and a flow control device disposed on the condenser source line, the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line having an open state and a closed state,

wherein the unit controller is configured to receive an input from a sensor to determine whether an appropriate pressure differential is present in the refrigerant pump line, in order to activate the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to direct refrigerant to the compressor.

2. The HVAC unit of claim 1, further comprising: an evaporator fluidly connected to the condenser, wherein the HVAC unit is a water chiller.

3. The HVAC unit of claim 1, further comprising: an evaporator fluidly connected to the condenser, wherein the HVAC unit is an oil free water chiller.

4. The HVAC unit of claim 1, wherein the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line is a solenoid valve.

5. The HVAC unit of claim 1, wherein the unit controller is further configured to: during startup, activate the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to the closed state, and the HVAC unit is configured such that activating the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to the closed state causes the condenser to be not in fluid communication with the refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly.

6. The HVAC unit of claim 1, wherein the unit controller is further configured to: during normal operation of the compressor, activate the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to the open state, and the HVAC unit is configured such that activating the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to the open state directs refrigerant from the condenser through the condenser source line and through the refrigerant pump line and the refrigerant pump to at least one of the motor and the drive of the compressor to cool at least one of the motor and the drive of the compressor.

10

7. The HVAC unit of claim 1, further comprising: an evaporator fluidly connected to the condenser, wherein the refrigerant cooling and lubrication assembly further includes an evaporator source line fluidly connected to the evaporator.

8. The HVAC unit of claim 7, wherein the refrigerant pump line is fluidly connected to the evaporator source line, and

the evaporator source line feeds into the refrigerant pump line.

9. The HVAC unit of claim 7, further comprising a flow control device disposed on the evaporator source line, the flow control device disposed on the evaporator source line having an open state and a closed state.

10. The HVAC unit of claim 9, wherein the flow control device disposed on the evaporator source line is a solenoid valve.

11. A method of lubricating the compressor of the HVAC unit of claim 1, comprising:

pressurizing the refrigerant pump line with refrigerant flow;

receiving by the unit controller the input from the sensor, and determining with the unit controller whether there is the appropriate pressure differential present along the refrigerant pump line, in order to activate the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to direct refrigerant to the compressor;

activating, with the unit controller, the flow control device disposed on the condenser source line to the open state, when the appropriate pressure differential is determined by the unit controller to be present along the refrigerant pump line;

and

starting the compressor and lubricating at least one of the motor and the drive of the compressor by delivering refrigerant from the condenser source line, which is fluidly connected to the condenser, so as to source refrigerant from the condenser.

* * * * *